




Ballarat Events Strategy **2018–2028**



Visit
Ballarat



Murrup Laar (Ancestral Stones) Artist: Deanne Gilson  [taracmoorephotography](#)



Acknowledgement of Country

The City of Ballarat acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land we live and work on, the Wadawurrung and Dja Dja Wurrung People, and recognises their continuing connection to the land and waterways. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend this to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People.

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Ballarat plays host to events that capture the interest of the local community and attract a range of visitors. The backdrop for our City's signature events – some of Australia's most significant heritage locations and beautiful natural landscapes – enables their reach to be amplified well beyond the local area and promote Ballarat to the world. Combined with a compelling local narrative, the Ballarat event program has enormous potential to be an authentic, bold, and dynamic articulation of the City's aspirations.

The purpose

This Events Strategy (Strategy) provides a roadmap for the development of Ballarat's event program over the next eight years. It will help ensure the outcomes of the events program are fully understood, optimised and in line with broader City of Ballarat strategies and priorities. With this in mind, the Strategy is designed to be a practical guide to assist the direction of current events, initiation and acquisition of new events, and provide a rationale for ceasing investment in others – to that end, it is a strategic framework for event development.

The Strategy acknowledges the strengths of the existing events program and its importance to the local community. It also articulates how events will help our community realise its aspirations, deliver more creative event executions, foster a balance in the program, and in turn help us attract a more diverse audience.

The Ballarat Events Strategy aims to guide event staff, other Council staff involved with events, and event industry stakeholders on the City's event priorities, and ensure they meet the needs of our local community and target audiences. It will help ensure our City's events program is contemporised and developed for new and existing audiences in an ever-changing world.



Ballarat Begonia Festival 2021 | [📷](#) [📱](#) [andysmithphotographic](#)



Our Vision

For the Ballarat Event Calendar to be a prominent driver towards realising our aspiration of being an innovative, inspiring, caring, and courageous city.

Our Mission

To deliver the Ballarat Event Calendar in a way that authentically amplifies our city's points of difference and supports our prosperity.

How will we know the extent to which we have delivered on our Vision in 2028?

From 2021 onwards, we will track these two questions via the City of Ballarat's Brand Health Tracker:

i. Has your perception of Ballarat changed in recent times?

ii. Open question for anyone that answers yes to Q1: What has changed your perception of Ballarat?

Our measure of how effective we have been in realising our Vision will be the percentage of the target market sample that name an event or events (response to Q2) as having contributed to their perception of Ballarat changing.

How will we know how effective we have been at delivering on our Mission?

Over the course of the eight years this strategy spans, the City of Ballarat will transparently and consistently measure the following to gauge how effectively we are delivering on our Mission:

- Direct spend by visitors who cite an event as a main reason for having visited Ballarat.
- Percentage of local residents that strongly agree that a signature or identity event makes them proud to be from Ballarat.

More detail on our Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that will track how effective our City's event calendar is can be seen on Page 10.

To further understand what our Vision and Mission statements mean, it's important that we define a few things through the lens of events and tourism more broadly.

Our City's Values

As detailed in the City's Prosperity Framework (PF), the people of Ballarat want to move into a future where they see Ballarat as being defined by the four values outlined below. By aligning our strategy with these, we will ensure the event visitor experience is authentic and true to place.

What does the aspiration for our City look like through an events lens?

Our residents want to be seen as...	In an events context, that means...
1. Innovative	Creatively amplifying the narrative and stories of our people and places
	Supporting and empowering our creative community through active collaboration
2. Courageous	Sharing our distinctive identity and truth
	Empowering our locals to be involved in our events
3. Inspiring	Immersing our audiences in uniquely local experiences that inspire civic pride
	Facilitating contemporary activations that connect with a range of audiences
4. Caring	Welcoming visitors to our events with generosity and local hospitality
	Embracing and celebrating our diverse communities and cultures.

Strategy Objectives

Three primary objectives we want to drive via events, and how we define them:

1. Economic Objectives

We invest in these expecting to drive a specific economic return for our investment.

Three KPIs

- i. Direct spend by visitors that cite the event as a main reason for visiting
- ii. Net inflow of spend into Ballarat via event budget spend¹
- iii. Percentage of visitors that intend to return to Ballarat for leisure purposes.

2. Identity (Brand) Objectives

We invest in these to amplify Ballarat's brands and help Ballarat live up to its aspirations. Importantly, in doing so, we see economic impact occurring as an outcome of getting Identity right.

One KPI via our Brand Health Tracker²

Percentage of sample that:

- i. Agree with "My perception of Ballarat has changed in recent times", and
- ii. Spontaneously cite an event(s) as a reason for that shift in perception.

This result will be underpinned by shifts in the following four brand attributes (values) tracked in the Brand Health Tracker, all of which align back to the key aspirations the Ballarat community articulated in the Prosperity Framework (PF).

- Creative (Innovative in PF)
- Adventurous (Courageous in PF)
- Inspiring
- Welcoming (Caring in PF)

3. Civic, Liveability Objectives

These events are delivered for the benefit of our community. For those classed as 'Liveability' events, any economic or identity objectives that are realised should be ancillary to the benefit derived by the community itself. That said, classifying them in this way does not preclude them from evolving in to 'Identity' or 'Economic' events.

Five KPIs linking back to the Health and Wellbeing Plan, Ballarat's Creative Cities Strategy and 2040 Strategy

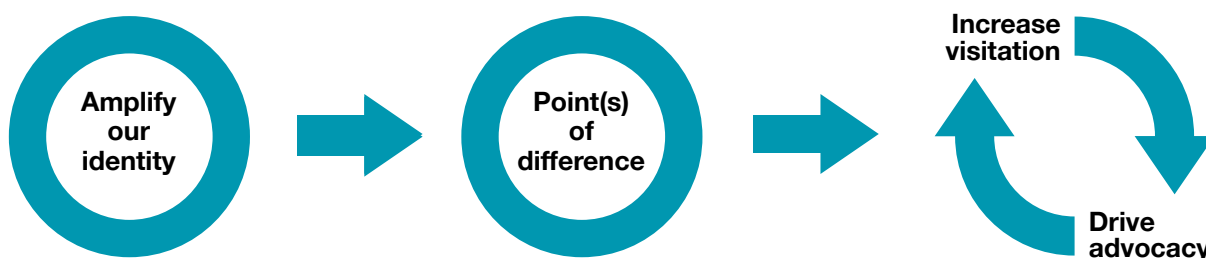
- Number of local attendees across all events
- Number of local participants across all events
- Number of local volunteers at events
- Percentage that 'know event well' on three-point awareness scale (measured via Community Tracker research)
- Percentage that state that a specific key event makes them proud to be from Ballarat (measured via Community Tracker research)

¹. Defined as the amount of event budget spent with Ballarat Business – that spent with Businesses based outside of Ballarat

². Quantum Market Research – Visit Ballarat Brand Tracking

Amplifying Our Unique Identity via Events

Why is concentrating on identity and brand characteristics important to us?



Ballarat's unique identity and experiences are the reason visitors come to Ballarat. Our culture, history and unique assets set us apart. They inspire pride in locals and make us a compelling destination for potential visitors.

Celebrating, amplifying, and sharing this identity through our events will highlight what makes Ballarat special. When we do this creatively and authentically, we turn our events into genuine **points of difference**.

These unique and inclusive experiences will **engage our existing audiences, attract new ones, and create an army of advocates** to promote the Ballarat experience far and wide.

The questions Council will ask themselves about Ballarat events:

From other work the Council has conducted, we know what Ballarat's points of difference (or experience pillars) are (See page 13). As such, when it comes to leveraging Ballarat's investment in events, we need to ask the following questions:

- i. How can our city invest in this event to ensure its content is delivered in a way that is;
 - » truly innovative and creative?
 - » authentic and unique to Ballarat?

- ii. Who within the community can partner to help create and elevate the attendee experience?
- iii. Does the event highlight our experience pillars, use our unique infrastructure and/or speak to one of our key attributes?

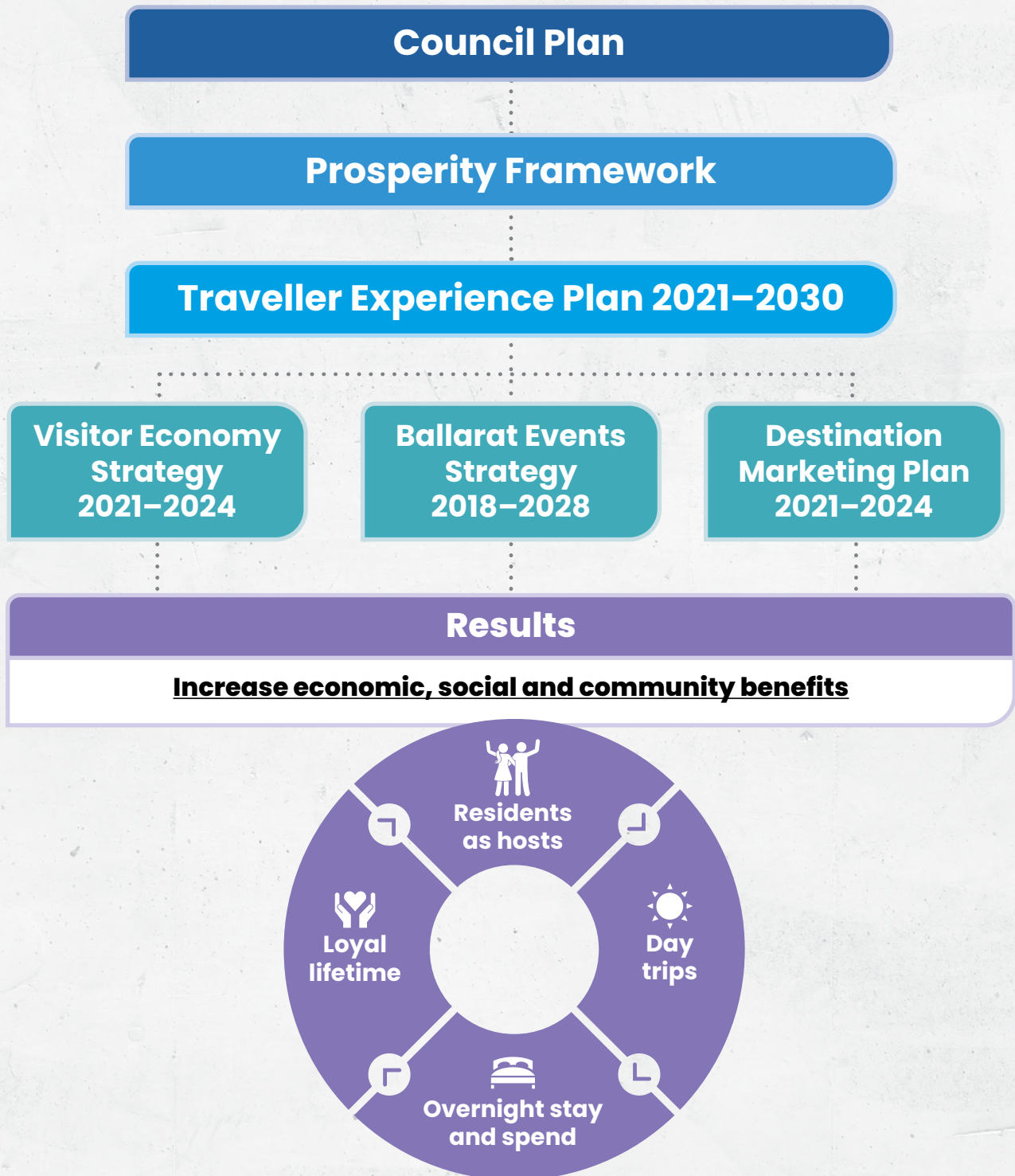
In responding to these questions through our events, Council will help deliver on Ballarat's Traveller Experience Plan, and more broadly, our aspiration to be a city that is innovative and creative, and in turn, inspiring.

By creating partnerships within the community, we can share the responsibility of growing the event offering and the quality of the attendee experience.

If Ballarat locals can help welcome visiting event attendees, we will show our City's caring nature and in turn, further elevate visitor experience.

Delivering on these brand promises and values will ensure our visiting event attendees leave Ballarat as champions of our region, creating the word of mouth that will change the perception of our City for the better.

Context of visitor economy planning



Ballarat's Core Experience Offer

Ballarat's culture is a reflection and expression of our customs, traditions, heritage, and social character. At the core of our distinctive offering is a deep and honest commitment to quality of place and the uniqueness of the people and stories that bring it to life, give it character and shape its distinction.

We need to think differently about the potential opportunities this presents and challenge the way we have done things in the past. We need to carve out our position in the destination marketplace and shift to becoming a place of creative connection. This will set us apart from other regional destinations in Victoria. This will mean moving from transactional experiences to more transformational and inspirational visitor experiences.

To achieve this shift, Ballarat needs to develop the quality and diversity of product, experiences, and events to keep visitors in the destination longer and spending more. The experiences need to be consistent with Ballarat's unique point of difference.

As set in the *Traveller Experience Plan 2021–2030*, they are expressed through the intersection of the two core pillars:

1. Cultural and creative

2. Contemporary heritage

These core pillars are at the root of Ballarat's identity and act as anchor points for the types of products, events, and experiences that we need to deliver.

1. Cultural and creative

A fusion of cultural and creative experiences crafted by exceptional artisans, makers, designers, creators, and performers.

2. Contemporary heritage

Experiences that are created against the rich tapestry of Ballarat's history and architecture.

Key Attributes

In addition to the two core pillars, the *Traveller Experience Plan 2021–2030* identified Ballarat and the broader region as have significant key attributes that are integral in driving visitation to the region. There are further opportunities to increase awareness, visitation, and yield from these key attributes.

- **Food and drink**
- **Sporting and active**
- **Accessible facilities**
- **Accommodation**
- **Greater Region**
- **Touring routes**
- **Retail**
- **Nature and sustainability**
- **Events**

Our Unique Infrastructure

Our Unique Infrastructure

Her Majesty's Theatre, the Art Gallery of Ballarat, Civic Hall, the Mechanics' Institute, the Mining Exchange, Craig's Royal Hotel, Lake Wendouree, leading sporting infrastructure such as Mars Stadium and the Ballarat Sports and Events Centre - our list of beautiful buildings, leisure infrastructure and event spaces is impressive. These spaces set us apart.

As such, when we invest in events we must, wherever possible, use these spaces and venues. Breaking the mould and using these spaces in innovative ways will help us deliver on our aspirations.

By being brave in how we use our unique infrastructure, we will deliver on our aspiration of being innovative and courageous, and all in a way that is true and authentically Ballarat.

If we put attributes, infrastructure, and narratives at the heart of delivering the Event Strategy, it will be a significant contributor towards delivering on the TEP.

The events strategy will deliver on the Traveller Experience Plan (TEP) in the following ways;

1. Help shift the perception of Ballarat and change the status quo
2. Address some of the identified experience gaps
3. Capitalise on a number of opportunities highlighted under each of the two key experience pillars
4. Develop and adopt a seasonal based thematic approach that provides opportunity for co-operative alignment to key partners such as Sovereign Hill. Development of seasonal based themes will give the clarity and assuredness requested by industry, providing confidence to invest in developing aligned product.



Current Event Calendar Impact

Economic impact delivered by the current calendar

To understand where we want to get to by 2028, it is critical to understand where we are currently positioned. To provide the current day benchmark, we have taken the results delivered by the 2019 event calendar*. In total, 42 events** were included in this benchmarking.

As seen in the 8-year strategy overview, the City of Ballarat will allocate resources to develop a robust measurement framework to provide consistency in measuring the success of the event calendar. This will require significant cooperation from external event owners and extensive attendee research.

However, as at March 2020, using the best available data and supplementing it with reasonable, conservative assumptions, we see the 42 events on the 2019 calendar delivered:

- 93,000 intrastate day-trip visitors
- 81,400 intrastate overnight visitors
- 17,000 interstate overnight visitors
- 881 international overnight visitors
- A total of 178,000 bed nights, delivering
- \$35.4m in visitor spend

The Ballarat Master Event Calendar can be seen on page 18.

* The benchmark for January and February events has been taken from the 2020 iterations as they were conducted prior to the onset of COVID-19.

** To be included in the benchmarking, events needed to be:
i. Supported by the City of Ballarat in some shape or form,
ii. Currently drive, or have potential to drive key economic, identity and/or liveability objectives, Ceremonial/ Civic events (i.e.: Ex-POW memorial service, ANZAC Day service, Vietnam Veterans service, Remembrance Day, and Carols by Candlelight) have been included as they have a significant impact upon the Events Team's time and resources.



Summer Sundays 2021 | 📷: @chip_shots

Classifying our Event Investment

By classifying each event on our City's event calendar, we help identify and focus on the primary intent behind each investment the City of Ballarat makes. Further, it allows us to easily understand which type of events and investments are delivering on our three primary objectives (Economic, Identity and Civic). To that end, we have classified our current events by Investment Intent.

Investment Intent

The City of Ballarat will manage its investment in events by allocating spend across three key categories:

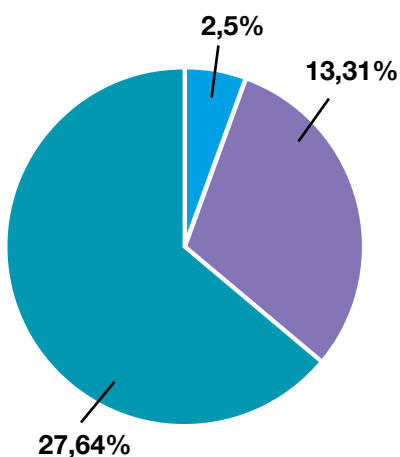
1. Produce – Council owned, recurring (and potentially one off) events that the City of Ballarat is responsible for producing, (e.g. Ballarat Begonia Festival)

2. Invest – Recurring events that are owned and produced by external parties. The City of Ballarat invests in these events with a specific outcome(s) in mind, (e.g. RoadNats)

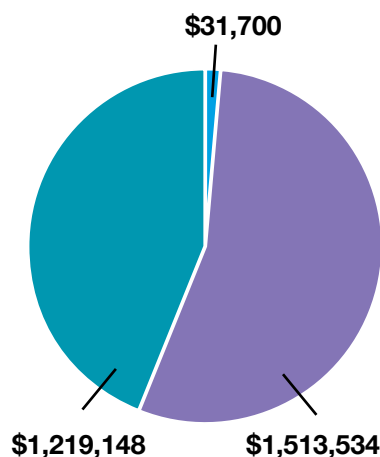
3. Acquire – One-off events that are externally owned and produced to deliver (primarily) economic returns. These typically use event infrastructure that gives Ballarat a point of difference (e.g. Nitro Circus in 2019)

The below graphs are a current representation of how City of Ballarat investment was split across the 2019 event calendar.

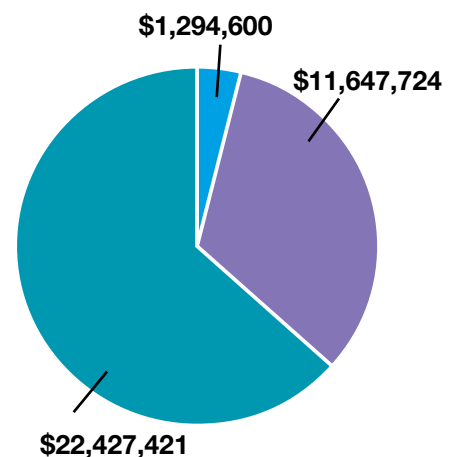
Number of events



CoB investment



Direct visitor spend



● Produce ● Invest ● Acquire

Ballarat Master Event Calendar

With the primary aim of bringing together visitor economy stakeholders to better deliver and leverage the benefits driven by events, the City of Ballarat has distilled down the region's key recurring annual events to form the Ballarat Master Events Calendar. The below bolded events have been identified and

classified as our region's **Signature Events**. These events are those that best reflect who we are, make us proud, and/or use our City's points of difference. These events deliver the most benefit to our community and have significant potential to deliver more if better leveraged.

JANUARY



AusCycling Road National Championships

Summer Sundays

MAY

Ballarat Heritage Festival



AUGUST

Ballarat International Foto Biennale (Aug-Oct)

JUNE

Ballarat Junior Basketball Tournament

SEPTEMBER

Ballarat and District Sporting Finals

FEBRUARY

Ballarat Gift
Rock Ballarat
Ballarat Beer Festival
Ballarat Swap Meet
Western United Match

JULY

Sovereign Hill Winter Wonderlights



Royal South Street Society Eisteddfod Competition (July-Oct)

The Red Series
Western Bulldogs Match

OCTOBER

Buninyong Festival

MARCH

Ballarat Senior Basketball Tournament
Ballarat Begonia Festival
Red Hot Summer Tour

NOVEMBER

Frolic Festival
Ballarat Cup
Springfest
Spilt Milk

APRIL

Western Bulldogs Match
Western United Match

DECEMBER

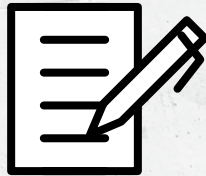
Christmas in Ballarat

This annual Master Calendar of Events will be further leveraged and supplemented by acquired and one-off events (eg: Nitro Circus in 2019, Summersault in 2021), sporting events and carnivals. The City of Ballarat will continue to work with industry to identify and develop new events that can build on the existing calendar of events.

Overview for next eight years – strategic priority areas



2021 **Reset and** **Benchmark**



2022 **Refine** **and Plan**



2023-25 **Nurture** **and Grow**



2025-2028 **Leverage** **and Optimise**

Priorities

- i. Analyse current Events Calendar and identify experience gaps
- ii. Launch Event Calendar and use to re-engage with local industry stakeholders
- iii. Classify City of Ballarat Intent and delivery against strategic objectives and involvement in each event on the calendar
- iv. Put in place a robust, replicable measurement program to benchmark the calendar's contribution to the City
- v. Actively develop collaborations and partnerships for event growth
- vi. Review all event investments that the City produces, acquires, or invests annually to ensure performance in line with strategic objectives

Priorities

- i. Continue to refine City of Ballarat governance, resourcing, and measurement
- ii. Write multi-year strategies for all signature events. Resource their implementation

Priorities

- i. Review the Strategy and reset in line with the post-COVID landscape. Set objectives around how we invest in events using our Strategic Intent and Investment Intent classifications
- ii. Set 2028 KPI targets based on benchmarks from 2021-22 research and measurement
- iii. Execute multi-year strategies for signature events

Priorities

- i. Review all event investments and create strategy for each to fully leverage City of Ballarat investment, and maximise subsequent Return on Investment



Strategic Priorities and Actions

Short Term

Analyse current event calendar and identify experience gaps

Output

Review event calendar and identify regular anchor events for stability and opportunities for one-off events that create freshness and that are unique and exclusive to Ballarat.

Develop a more balanced program in terms of size, location, and timing of events – increase smaller and night-time city focussed offerings, to deliver sustainable activity throughout the year.

Keep the doors open; continue delivering all scheduled City of Ballarat events within COVID restrictions of the day.

Create leveraging opportunities with industry to increase spend:

- event extensions/programming to convert day-trippers to overnight visitors
- encourage industry partnerships to increase the product proposition for visitors and to provide greater leveraging opportunities for businesses to promote direct to event audiences
- Seek a major biennial signature event for Ballarat that builds on the region's creative strengths for Spring 2022

Transform the quality and diversity of product, experiences, and events **Opportunity to promote local producers and suppliers.**

Output

Review programming content of events and activations and develop and refresh content to amplify our local narrative, creatives and venues delivering upon the Traveller Experience Plan;

- Refresh existing events to ensure quality, relevance and variety in line with the Strategy
- Regular and rigorous review and development of event program objectives to ensure alignment with strategic priorities
- Engage strategic creative thinkers to reinvent and reimagine event program both holistically and for individual events
- Increase and diversify the use of local built, natural and non-tangible assets for events that are distinctively Ballarat
- Actively seek event acquisitions that deliver on Strategy objectives
- Increase participation of local creative suppliers in all events and activations
- Increase use of local food and beverage producers and suppliers

Short Term

Distribute annual Event Calendar

Output

Develop, promote and distribute an annual Ballarat event calendar.

- Launch event calendar three months out from start of year and use it to re-engage with local industry stakeholders
- Ensure industry is aware of the City's direction and strategic objectives, and have the opportunity to, and know how to get involved in specific events and the calendar development more broadly
- Include events on the calendar that are both produced by Council and externally owned
- Promote calendar via City of Ballarat channels and via partners

Review Investment opportunities to ensure a more effective lever for the event calendar

Output

Amend Tourism Events Grant Fund to be more agile, timely and responsiveness to market needs. July 2021.

Refine the Tourism Event Grant guidelines

- To ensure funded events are generating a sound economic return
- are directly benefitting the Visitor Economy
- ensure funded events are aligned with our brand and strengths
- are developing our civic liveability objectives and engaging local businesses

Develop an event acquisition budget by July 2021 to actively attract compelling events that align with our brand and strengths and support mid-week and annual calendar gaps as identified through the gap analysis process.

Measurement of event impact

Output

Create and invest in a robust measurement and research program.

- Agree on the precise way to measure Visitor Spend. Review Victorian Auditor General's (and by extension, Visit Victoria's) agreed framework
- Create templates for event owners to complete as part of their acquittal
- Require robust justification for the figures before releasing final tranche of payment
- Contract with event owners to supply ticketing reports, economic impact studies, crowd counts etc on a case by case basis. In some cases, part of the City of Ballarat's investment with the event owners should be allocated to research
- Carry out regular, consistently executed research with the community

Short Term

Collaboration and Partnerships

Output

Actively develop collaborations and partnerships for event program growth.

- Review City of Ballarat Events Unit web presence in the execution and delivery of the Event Strategy
- Promote event services to encourage external producers - promote that Ballarat is open for business to the event industry
- Develop partnerships with government, community and commercial groups to initiate and support new and existing events that reflect our identity and support the local economy
- Amplify our identity to event producers by highlighting our unique infrastructure, ability to support events in comparison to other regional areas
 - » Streamline and simplify grant / funding process using the Strategy's three objectives as a guide to what types of events Ballarat wants to attract and partner with
 - » Update available resources on City of Ballarat website e.g. facilities map, asset register, local event suppliers' directory
- Provide a guide on to how to navigate Council processes and regulatory requirements

Local involvement and engagement

Output

- Continue to grow and foster use of local artists and creatives in programming
- Regular engagement with local creatives, event stakeholders and suppliers regarding the event program, how to get involved and how to influence it
- Initiate and encourage collaboration with local community organisations to support authentically local events and activations that instil community pride and grow capacity

Accessibility and Inclusion

Output

Embrace and celebrate our diverse communities and cultures and welcome visitors through our unique Ballarat experiences.

- Continue to incorporate First Nations, multicultural and diverse community experiences and involvement across all events and activations where appropriate
- Involve local suppliers/ resources in event delivery, include growing base of event services available in Ballarat, build local capacity
- Facilitate and promote involvement of local artists to build capacity and promote local talent
- Collaborate with local business to develop place appropriate events and activations that will support the sector and activate local business and commercial centres

Operational sustainability and direction

Output

Develop considered multi-year strategies for key events. Execute strategies in following years.

- Develop and deliver sustainable, multi-year plans for all key event investments
- Resource the delivery of these plans and empower key staff to deliver on them
- Set 2028 KPI targets based on benchmarks from 2021-22 research and measurement

Medium Term 2023 – 2025

Review strategy following three years of implementation to ensure relevance is maintained

Output

Review Ballarat Event Strategy and re-set in line with post COVID landscape.
Revise objectives around how we invest in events using strategic intent and investment intent clarifications.

Explore opportunities to promote Ballarat’s sporting, cultural, participation and spectator events to increase visitor demand and visitor expenditure

Output

Continue to explore opportunities with industry for greater leveraging from business and sporting events.

- Cohesive business and sports events approach
- Coordination of event calendar, open days, attractions to encourage multiple activities to encourage an extended stay
- Develop opportunities for industry to pre-promote to the sports events visitor
- Develop opportunities for industry to leverage off the sports events visitors, once they are in Ballarat
- Support industry in re-building the business events sector to support mid-week activation

Elevate attendee experience

Output

Strive for creative and delivery excellence in all components of our activations and events.

- Determine creative development model for key Identity / signature events to ensure innovative and consistent visitor experiences
- Creatively and boldly amplify our competitive advantages within our events to expand our audience demographic and reach beyond Ballarat
- Develop strong, contemporary Ballarat events branding across all events
- Regular attendee research for all events to gather qualitative feedback

City of Ballarat structure

Output

Continue to refine City of Ballarat governance, resourcing, and measurement.
Review resourcing and structure of the Events Team to achieve strategic outcomes.

Long Term 2025 – 2028

Operational sustainability and direction

Output

Execute multi-year strategies for key events.
Set 2030 KPI targets based on benchmarks from 2021-22 research and measurement.

Infrastructure and investment plans for identified event precincts

Output

Review event infrastructure at event sites and determine future needs and opportunities for development of key event precincts.

Environmental Sustainability

Output

Continue to refine City of Ballarat governance, resourcing, and measurement.
Review resourcing and structure of the Events Team to achieve strategic outcomes.

Review the Ballarat Event Strategy

Output

Review strategy and reset in line with the post-COVID landscape. Set objectives around how we invest in events using our Strategic Intent and Investment Intent classifications.

Methodology

This Event Strategy was developed through consultation, evaluation, and research in line with industry best practice; the Ballarat City Council Plan and other related Council strategies with community, sector and staff priorities front of mind. The research and consultation was undertaken between April and November 2020.

Document Research

City of Ballarat Documents

- City of Ballarat Council Plan 2017-2021
- Ballarat Prosperity Framework 2019
- Ballarat Strategy 2040 – Today, Tomorrow, Together
- Ballarat 2030 Traveller Experience Plan
- Ballarat Creative City Strategy 2019
- Ballarat Creative Precinct Master Plan
- City of Ballarat Health and Wellbeing Plan 2017-2021
- Ballarat Event Strategy 2018-2028
- City of Ballarat Grants Policy and Guidelines
- Ballarat Brand Book presentation

Related Documents

- Visit Ballarat Business Events Sector Plan 2018
- Visit Ballarat Brand Tracking Report 2019
- Art Gallery Ballarat Strategic Plan

Event Documents

- Briefs
- Event Reports and acquittals
- Economic Impact assessments
- Debriefs
- Marketing material
- Event market research



Consultation

- Interviews with City of Ballarat staff, Councillors and affiliated committees including:
 - » Members of the Events Team and other staff associated with events within Council
 - » Events Reference Group
 - » Event Strategy Project Working Group
- Interviews with external event stakeholders including representatives from:
 - » Foto Biennale
 - » Commerce Ballarat
 - » Business Events Victoria
 - » Art Gallery of Ballarat
 - » Visit Victoria
 - » Accolade Event Management
 - » Local Hospitality Industry
 - » Sovereign Hill






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